

THE MILITANT

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE VOL. 79/NO. 8 MARCH 9, 2015

Walmart blinks: Pay hike product of struggle

BY GLOVA SCOTT

WASHINGTON — The Feb. 19 announcement that Walmart will increase starting wages to \$9 an hour in April and for current “associates” to \$10 next February puts wind in the sails of all of us fighting for better pay, a 40-hour workweek, union representation and dignity.

This pay raise is not an act of kind-

AS I SEE IT

ness from Walmart executives, but the result of years of protests, including recent actions by OUR Walmart, backed by the United Food and Commercial Workers union. We have joined with McDonald’s and other fast-food workers, airport workers, carwashers and others demanding \$15 an hour, a full workweek and a union.

While the minimum wage is at or above \$9 per hour in seven states and

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Oil workers expand nat’l strike, fight for safety

Explosion rocks non-struck Calif. refinery



Militant/Bob Samson

Workers rally Feb. 21 at Motiva refinery in Port Arthur, Texas, as they join national oil strike.

BY BOB SAMSON

PORT ARTHUR, Texas — The United Steelworkers union rejected the oil bosses’ latest concession contract Feb. 20 and moved to expand the national oil strike to four new facilities in Texas and Louisiana.

Two days earlier, a large explosion ripped through the Exxon Mobil re-

finery in Torrance, California, injuring four workers and spewing ash and debris over surrounding neighborhoods, underlining the issue of refinery safety the strikers are putting at the center of their fight.

Hundreds of oil workers rallied outside the Motiva refinery here Feb. 21 as they joined the nationwide strike, which began Feb. 1 and now involves nearly 6,600 workers at 15 petro-

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Ukraine toilers fight separatist war moves, boss attacks

BY NAOMI CRAINE AND JOHN STUDER

One year after the ouster of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich amid sustained mass popular protests against his corrupt, pro-Moscow regime, “people have changed but the system hasn’t,” Alexei Simvolokov, a leader of the Independent Trade Union of Miners in Dnepropetrovsk,

SOLIDARITY WITH UKRAINE WORKERS!

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told the *Militant* in a Feb. 23 phone interview.

Simvolokov gave a glimpse of some of the challenges facing working people in Ukraine today as they confront the effects of a deepening economic crisis and attacks on their livelihoods, the spreading separatist war, and attacks on democratic rights. But the confidence and self-worth gained during the anti-Yanukovich protests at the Maidan in Kiev and around the country has strengthened the working class.

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Inmates protest barbaric conditions in Texas prison



AP Photo/Valley Morning Star, David Pike

Protesting demeaning living conditions and lack of medical care and demanding respect for their dignity, inmates took control of a privately run federal prison in South Texas Feb. 20 before attacks by local police and the FBI put down the protest the following day.

The Willacy County Correctional Center in Raymondville, Texas, 40 miles north of the Mexican border, imprisons nearly 3,000 undocumented workers, many for the “crime” of returning to the U.S. after having been deported. It’s run by for-profit contractor Management and Training Corp.

At the Willacy facility, prisoners are packed into 10 Kevlar tents, 200 in each, with only three feet between each bed. Because of overcrowding, new arrivals are often placed in solitary confinement for extended periods, according to a June 2014 American Civil Liberties Union report. “They treat us like animals,” Sergio, a 26-year-old originally from Honduras, told the ACLU.

The protest began when inmates refused to go to work or appear for breakfast. After the facility was locked down, some 2,000 prisoners gathered in the recreation yard. Officers attacked them with tear gas. Three of the 10 prison tents caught fire.

The prisoners went on strike in 2013 to protest overflowing toilets and protested in 2012 when prison officials shut down the facility’s water for two days without providing anything to drink or usable toilets.

— BRIAN WILLIAMS

‘Oil workers strike can strengthen all workers,’ Chicago socialist says

BY ANNE PARKER

WHITING, Ind. — “The oil refinery strike is the first national strike in a long time and has the potential of strengthening not only the United Steelworkers, but other union fights and all working people,” Dan Fein, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Chicago, told union mem-

bers picketing at the BP oil refinery here Feb. 21. Strikers are demanding changes in unsafe working conditions that have led to explosions, deaths and injuries at a number of refineries.

Strikers told Fein that workers at three refineries and a chemical plant co-owned by Shell Oil Co. were joining the strike. That expands the shutdown to 15 facilities across the country. More than 1,100 workers are on

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Ferguson, Mo., lawsuit exposes debtors’ prisons for traffic tickets

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Six months after Michael Brown was killed by cop Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri, and after ongoing protests spread nationwide over police abuse there, a class-action lawsuit was filed Feb. 8 in federal court challenging city rulers’ practice of jailing low-income workers for outstanding traffic tickets or other infractions and the subhuman conditions they’re subjected to while incarcerated.

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‘We see too many of these grade cross crashes’ 6

—On the picket line, p. 5—

Israel Chemicals workers walk out to block layoffs

Airport workers demand regular schedules, pay raise

Cop killing of deli worker in Georgia sparks protest

BY LINDA PORTER

DECATUR, Ga. — Kevin Davis, a 44-year-old African-American deli worker, died Dec. 31, two days after he was shot here by Joseph Pitts, a DeKalb County cop. Davis’ family and supporters have organized rallies and vigils demanding the Georgia Bureau of Investigation be called in to take over the case.

After Davis was shot, police took him to Grady Hospital, cuffed his ankles to his bed and denied requests from his family to visit him. Family members “called, went to the hospital, they tried everything in their power to see him so he wouldn’t die alone,” Mawuli Davis, lawyer for the family, told the press.

“They denied us access to him because they didn’t want him telling us what really happened that night,” Delisa Davis, Kevin’s sister, told the *Guardian*.

Some 100 friends, co-workers and opponents of police killings marched Jan. 29 from the DeKalb Courthouse to Sawicki’s sandwich shop where Davis worked and back to the courthouse.

“DeKalb County Police dismissed us like yesterday’s garbage,” Delisa Davis told the crowd. “We need help because we can’t fight alone.”

Kevin Davis had called 911 after Terrance Hilyard, a down-on-his-luck co-worker he had invited to stay at the apartment he shared with his girlfriend, April Edwards, got in an argument with Edwards, stabbed her and fled.

Pitts showed up and shot and killed Davis’ dog. Hearing the shots, Edwards said they thought Hilyard had come back. Davis got his handgun and went to the door, where Pitts shot him.

The cops claim Pitts announced himself as an officer and told Davis to put down the gun before shooting. Edwards and a number of neighbors say Pitts shot Davis as soon as he saw him, without saying anything. Everyone agrees Davis did not point his gun at anyone.

Davis had no history of trouble with the law. He was well respected by his co-workers at the deli, who have built a memorial to him and spoken out publicly in his defense.

Family members and their supporters are planning further activities. “This is exactly what Kevin would have wanted of us,” Delisa Davis said, “to seek justice. He didn’t deserve what he got.”



Rally in Decatur, Georgia, Jan. 29 to protest killing of Kevin Davis by DeKalb County cop. Some 100 people took part, including co-workers, relatives and other opponents of police brutality.

America’s Revolutionary Heritage

by George Novack

A historical materialist analysis of the genocide against Native Americans, the first American revolution, the Civil War and the rise of industrial capitalism. Explains how the second American revolution was needed to overthrow slavocracy in the South and how a counter-revolution defeating Radical Reconstruction was necessary to consolidate capitalist rule. \$25

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THE MILITANT

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The ‘Militant’ covers strikes and other labor battles around the world, from Israel to Iran to North America, helping workers in struggle learn from each other’s experiences defending themselves from attacks by the bosses and their governments.



Striking child care workers rally Feb. 9 in Jerusalem with signs in Hebrew and Arabic.

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Oil worker: ‘Turn bosses’ bribe over to party’

“Attached find a check for \$1,484.77,” Philadelphia oil refinery worker Mitchel Rosenberg wrote to the Socialist Workers Party Feb. 4. “This ‘bonus’ is based on ‘productivity’ and ‘safe work hours,’ at a time when workers in refineries around the U.S. are on strike, fighting against unsafe conditions and injuries caused by the bosses’ relentless drive for ever-greater profits.” Rosenberg said his local’s contract doesn’t expire until September.

Bonuses of this kind — given by capitalists in an effort to bribe workers to accept speedup and forced overtime and not to report injuries so the bosses can record “accident-free” quarters — are referred to as “blood money” by supporters of the communist movement, who put them to good use, turning them over to the SWP’s Capital Fund to help finance the party’s long-range work.

“I can’t think of a better thing to do with this blood money than to contribute it to the party that will back the strike to the end, while fighting alongside oil workers and the rest of the class until the brutal profit system goes up the smokestack of history,” Rosenberg wrote.

Over the past two months seven workers contributed “productivity” and “safety” bonuses and other bribes from bosses totaling \$2,822.07 to the party fund.

Three Philadelphia workers sent \$50 each for “gift cards” they received after rail car maker Hyundai Rotem laid them off.

Dave Ferguson from Atlanta sent \$510.90 received as a bribe from bosses at the Yamaha automotive plant where he works.

Ellie Garcia in Los Angeles sent blood money from two companies that had to pay former employees as a result of successful class-action lawsuits for unpaid time, and a \$181.05 year-end bonus from the aerospace company where she works.

Clint Drake in Seattle, who also works at an aerospace plant, sent \$349 from “holiday,” “profit-sharing” and “birthday” bonuses. Since the bosses defeated a union-organizing drive last year they have stepped up use of such bribes to try and forestall future union efforts. “Let the bribes become their opposite by using them to build the workers’ movement,” Drake wrote.

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— MAGGIE TROWE

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Ukraine workers fight

Continued from front page

“There are more and more problems of workers not being paid, declining production and a lack of jobs, exacerbated by the influx of workers who’ve fled to other parts of Ukraine from the fighting in Donetsk and Luhansk,” Simvolokov said. “Despite the difficult situation, protests are increasing.”

At the large rocket plant that employs 7,000 people, one of the major factories in Dnepropetrovsk that used to produce missiles for the Soviet Union, workers formed a new Independent Trade Union of Labor Protection in January, said Evgenyi Derkach, one of its leaders, in the same interview. “We’ve had four protests so far, of about 500 workers each, fighting for seven months’ back pay.” One of their banners reads, “Don’t reawaken the Maidan — pay our wages.”

After a union meeting Feb. 18, Derkach was lured out of his home and assaulted on the street by thugs who jumped out of a car, beat him and took off. One year after the Maidan protests, “normal people can still be beaten in the street; the same *tetushka* are still there,” Simvolokov said, referring to the anti-labor thugs that served the interests of the bosses and Ukraine’s pro-Moscow rulers for years. Rocket plant workers are planning another protest for Feb. 25, Derkach said.

The Ukrainian currency has plunged to a record low, which means now “the average pay is only worth \$50 a month,” Simvolokov said. “You can’t live on that.”

He said he has less contact with union members in the separatist-held areas, where conditions are even worse.

“Those who are working are not getting any pay,” he said. “There are power cuts that leave miners trapped underground without ventilation. It’s very hard there now. I don’t know how they survive.”

Pro-Moscow authorities refuse to allow miners to organize into the independent union there, he said.

Rally bombed in Kharkiv

Marches and rallies took place across Ukraine Feb. 20-22 marking the anniversary of the Maidan and Yanukovich’s overthrow. Some, such as an event in Kiev, were organized by government officials, including President Petro Poroshenko.

Other actions were organized by groups that spearheaded the Maidan protests and have remained active since.

At a Feb. 22 rally in Kharkiv, Ukraine’s second-largest city, a large bomb was set off as marchers approached. At least three people were killed, including a leader of the Maidan protests.

There have been about a dozen bombings by pro-Moscow forces in Kharkiv in recent months, but this “was the most brazen and brutal attack yet, the first on a peaceful protest,” Oleksandr Shevchenko, an activist with the Maidan Monitoring Information Center who was at the rally of about 2,000, said in a phone interview Feb. 23.

The cease-fire between the government and separatists in eastern Ukraine, which was supposed to take effect Feb. 15, has substantial gaps. Since separatist forces took the town of Debaltseve Feb. 18 with the help of Russian troops and heavy weapons, the focus of fighting has shifted to the area near Mariupol. A port city of half a million on the Sea of

Pussy Riot protests police brutality, Ukraine war



AP Photo/Denis Sinyakov

“I Can’t Breathe” is the title of a new song released Feb. 18 by the Russian political punk group Pussy Riot protesting the killing of Eric Garner in Staten Island last year by New York City cop Daniel Pantaleo. The song has two videos, one showing band members Nadezhda Tolokonnikova (left) and Maria Alyokhina, both of whom spent nearly two years in prison for a protest against the regime of Russian President Vladimir Putin, being buried alive wearing Russian riot police uniforms. The other shows protests in New York against the chokehold killing of Garner. The song closes with U.S. musician Richard Hell reading the final words Garner said to police, ending with “I can’t breathe” over and over.

The song is a collaborative effort with several Russian and American musicians. “Pussy Riot’s first English song is dedicated to those who can no longer breathe,” Tolokonnikova and Alyokhina wrote in an email interview published in *Billboard* magazine. “To Eric Garner and to all who suffer from state terror — killed, choked, perished because of war and police violence — to political prisoners and those on the streets fighting for change.”

They said the “bloody war in Ukraine, fueled and controlled by Russia,” led Pussy Riot to decide to record a series of anti-war songs, of which this is the first. They were in New York working on that project in December during “huge demonstrations in memory of Eric Garner, racism and police violence. And we were in the heart of these demonstrations.”

— NAOMI CRAINE

Azov, Mariupol is a center of steel production and also the main Ukrainian city between the Russian border and the Crimean Peninsula, which Moscow oc-

cupied and then annexed last year.

Ukrainian officials say they have seen 26 Grad missile systems and 36 tanks and armored personnel carriers cross into Ukrainian territory from Russia in recent days. The town of Shyrokyne, just a few miles east of the city, has come under heavy shelling. And tens of thousands of regular Russian troops have gathered near the border.

The cease-fire agreement called for an exchange of all prisoners by both sides. One prisoner exchange, of 139 Ukrainian soldiers and 52 separatists, did take place Feb. 21. Poroshenko had said helicopter pilot Nadiya Savchenko, who is imprisoned in Russia, would be included, but Russian officials insist they will not release her.

Savchenko was captured by separatists in June and kidnapped to Russia, where authorities seek to frame her up on false charges of abetting the killing of two Russian journalists. They claim she provided targeting information to Ukrainian forces after she had already been seized by pro-Moscow forces. While in prison, Savchenko was elected to the Ukrainian parliament.

She has refused food since December 13, protesting her treatment including forced placement in a notorious Moscow psychiatric facility and lack of medical care. She has won widespread support in Ukraine and beyond.

In the name of war necessity, Kiev is taking anti-working-class measures that undermine democratic rights. In Dnepropetrovsk, the government closed a TV station they said was pro-Russian.

“How can they say the government respects rule of law and democracy when it does this?” said Simvolokov. “Freedom of speech is very important. In our protests we have a sign that says, ‘It’s impossible to prohibit freedom of speech.’”

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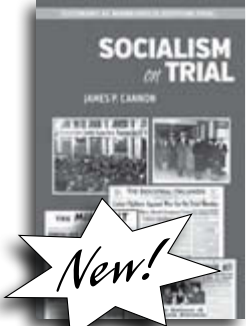


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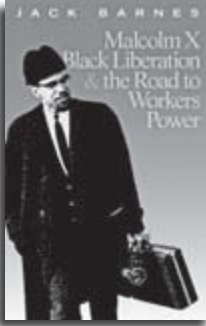
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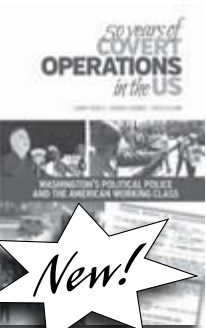
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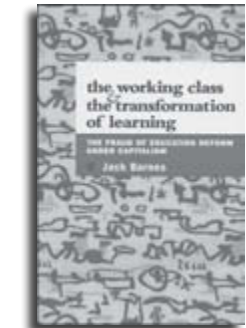
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Oil workers expand strike

Continued from front page
chemical installations in seven states, including 12 refineries. The refinery here is the largest in the U.S., and, like the other three newly struck installations, is a joint venture between Shell Oil and Saudi Aramco. Shell is leading the negotiations with the union for the oil bosses on the industry-pattern contract.

“We don’t want to lose what our grandfathers fought for with their blood over the last 75 years,” Brian Strohm, a lead operator at Motiva’s hydrocracker unit, told the *Militant*. “We make good money, but the company makes billions at the expense of the worker. Business decisions are based on money not safety.”

The national strike, the first since 1980, now involves refineries that account for 19 percent of U.S. oil-producing capacity. All but one of the refineries are continuing some production, carried out by management and contractors. Union-organized plants not yet on strike continue to work on 24-hour contract extensions.

“Management continues to refuse to consider any process or proposal that would promote a safer workplace with better trained workers and less fatigue,” says *The Oil Strike*, a union bulletin dat-

ed Feb. 22. “The industry refuses to address well-documented and widespread safety deficiencies. They reject our efforts to reduce excessive overtime. The company wants to continue to rely on contractors for daily maintenance, and they refuse to fill permanent vacancies in the units.”

While the union once organized workers of all trades and occupations in the refineries, bosses over past decades have eroded the industrial character of the union by hiring contractors — some organized by other unions and some nonunion — to do maintenance and other nonoperating jobs.

The Steelworkers union is pushing to win back many of those jobs. This is a key “sticking point,” Shell told the *Wall Street Journal* Feb. 22.

“The strike is all about safety,” Dave Martin, vice president of United Steelworkers Local 8-719 at Marathon Oil in Catlettsburg, Kentucky, told the *Militant*.

The local union had some 1,200 members in 1992, Martin said, but now has 429. Jobs have been slashed and some 400 contract workers now fill jobs the union used to organize, about half organized by the building trades and half nonunion. More and more work has been dumped on operators, Martin explained, and “they don’t staff for emergencies.”

There is massive overtime at the refinery. Operators usually work 10 eight-hour shifts in a row, then get one day off. Marathon wants to institute 12-hour days and require workers to be on standby on their days off. The bosses have succeeded in imposing these conditions on workers in most of the industry.

Torrance blast highlights safety fight

After the Torrance explosion, which caused the ground in the area to shake with the force of a small earthquake and badly damaged a 12-story 1,000-ton catalytic cracking unit, the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health ordered refinery bosses to shut down work inside the unit.

Exxon Mobil played down the disaster. “The material is not expected to be hazardous to people or animals under the conditions it was released,” company spokesman Todd Spitler said. “However, it may cause irritation to the skin, eyes and throat.”



Striking oil workers rally Feb. 7 outside Marathon refinery in Catlettsburg, Kentucky.

Unionists disagree. “The piece of equipment that blew up handles spent catalysts and flue gases. Our position is that it is harmful,” Dave Campbell, secretary-treasurer of USW Local 675, told the *Militant* in a phone interview.

At the Exxon Mobil refinery, which is not yet being struck, bosses have accumulated more than \$100,000 in penalties for equipment and safety violations there over the last five years.

The refinery has a long history of explosions. In 1994, a gas explosion sent flames 40 feet into the air, injuring 28 people. A huge blast tore through the plant in 1988, killing one and injuring nine, leading to a criminal investigation against the company.

Solidarity building

In Catlettsburg, people stop and bring food. The USW local at nearby AK Steel is hosting a dinner for the strikers at their union hall. Other unions in the area have made money contributions. Teamster truck drivers and union rail workers have refused to cross the picket line, forcing bosses to take over getting shipments into the plant.

“There hasn’t been a day when someone hasn’t stopped by,” striker Gene Patterson, 50, told the *Militant*. “I’ve always blown my horn and waved when I saw someone on strike in the past ... but this has changed me. I’m going to join them now. I can’t wait to pay it forward.”

More than a dozen cars filled with Steelworkers members caravanned from the USW district hall in Gary, Indiana, Feb. 19 to striking Local 7-1’s hall in nearby Whiting to help hold down picket lines in the extremely cold weather.

The strikers have received messages of support from unionists in Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, France, Norway, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the IndustriALL Global Union, representing workers in mining, energy and manufacturing in 143 countries.

“Bangladeshi garment workers know all too well the tragic consequences when multinational companies put profit over the safety of workers’ lives,” wrote Mohammed Towhidur Rahman, president of the Bangladesh Apparels Workers Federation. “We lost thousands of our brothers and sisters in the tragic yet avoidable Tazreen factory fire and Rana Plaza garment factory collapse. Workplace accidents are avoidable if safety measures are put in place.”

Ned Measel in Catlettsburg, Kentucky; Bill Arth in Los Angeles; and Linda Avers in Whiting, Indiana, contributed to this article.



Wanda Pallew, a console operator for 13 years, pickets Motiva refinery in Port Arthur, Texas, Feb. 21, joining nationwide strike.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

NEW YORK
New York
The Rise of Workers’ Resistance and Developing Self-Confidence. Speaker: Maggie Trowe, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress, 11th C.D.; editor of “On the Picket Line” column in the *Militant*. Sat., Feb. 28. Buffet, 6:30 p.m.; program, 7:30 p.m. Donation: \$5 buffet, \$5 program. *St. Peter’s Church, 619 Lexington Ave. Tel.: (646) 434-8117.*

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25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



March 9, 1990
NEW YORK — Protesting residents, many from Colombia, organized a 1,000-car motorcade to Kennedy International Airport February 25. The dramatic procession highlighted charges that discrimination against Colombians was responsible for the Avianca plane crash in Cove Neck, Long Island, in January — a disaster that claimed 73 lives. Protesters said the jet, which had run out of fuel, was denied the necessary landing priority because it was from Colombia.

A spokesperson for the protesters said there were at least two nearby airports where the plane could have landed, but that authorities want to restrict Colombian aircraft to airports that have drug-sniffing dogs.



March 8, 1965
JACKSON, Miss. — Several hundred people attended the Freedom Democratic Party’s one-day convention here Feb. 21. Among the delegates were students, workers, teachers, ministers, owners of small businesses, and unemployed. A tone of militancy marked the discussion. A teenager in the Mississippi Student Union said: “The U.S. government is sending troops to Vietnam supposedly fighting for freedom for South Vietnam. Why can’t they send troops to Mississippi to fight for *our* freedom.” A teacher, said: “We might lose our jobs or get killed but something’s got to be done.” After endorsing the idea of a statewide school boycott, he said: “I want to say I’m sorry it’s taken so long for me to get on this freedom train.”



March 9, 1940
Again displaying their position as the vanguard of the Indian people, 135,000 textile workers of Bombay have declared a general strike, demanding a 25 per cent wage increase to make up for rising living costs since the beginning of the war. These workers represent about 90 per cent of Bombay’s textile mills and come from 45 different mills. Meeting at Patna on March 1, the Executive Committee of the All-India Nationalist Congress has decided to prepare for the launching of a civil disobedience campaign against British imperialism. In a strongly worded resolution, nationalist India has openly disassociated itself from British rule and its war aims.

—ON THE PICKET LINE—

MAGGIE TROWE, EDITOR

Help make this column a voice of workers' resistance!

This column is dedicated to spreading the truth about the labor resistance that is unfolding today. It seeks to give voice to those engaged in battle and help build solidarity. Its success depends on input from readers. If you are involved in a labor struggle or have information on one, please contact me at 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018; or (212) 244-4899; or themilitant@mac.com. We'll work together to ensure your story is told.

—Maggie Trowe

Israel Chemicals workers walk out to block layoffs

Some 400 phosphate workers at the Dead Sea Works unit of Israel Chemicals Ltd. walked off the job Feb. 19, joining 850 workers who have been on strike since Feb. 2 at the company's Bromine Compounds factory near Beersheba protesting planned layoffs.

The strike by members of Histadrut, the largest union federation in Israel, began after the company refused the union's compromise offer of giving early retirement to 70 workers who volunteered. Instead, the company sent termination letters to 140 workers at Bromine Compounds and has similar plans for Dead Sea Works.

Israel Chemicals, one of the world's largest producers of bromine, potash and phosphoric acid, mines minerals and manufactures additives for food, fertilizers and industrial products.

"The wages in the plant are the highest in the bromine industry in the entire world," wrote Nehemia Shtrasler, business writer for the daily *Haaretz* in a Feb. 13 column attacking the strike. He claimed that the bromine division lost \$250 million in the past eight years as a result of an "excessive number of workers and bloated salary costs," warning that investors "will not come to a place where they cannot fire when necessary."

"They say the workers make too much. But the operators make their money from working weekends and holidays at overtime pay," Ilana Kerman, an office worker at Bromine Compounds, said by phone from Beersheba Feb. 20.

"Israel Chemicals is one of the most profitable businesses in Israel," said Yehudith Borochoy, a striker who works in the marketing department.

"This is not a pleasant place to work. Our clothes stink, we stink from all the chemicals," Martin Stone, a chemical engineer and union member at the Bromine Compounds, said.

This is the first time in more than 30 years that workers in the bromine unit have gone on strike, he said. "The company wants to weaken the union committee here and set a precedent that they can fire anyone whenever they want."

—Seth Galinsky

National Gallery workers in London strike for five days

LONDON — Workers at the government-owned National Gallery here, an art museum with a collection of more than 2,300 works, struck Feb. 3-7 against the bosses' plans to contract out 400 of 600 jobs to a private company. The workers, members of the Public and Commercial Services union, guard the art collection, guide visitors and arrange tours. They are demanding £9.15 (\$14.10) per hour, the London "living wage," a nonenforceable benchmark given lip-service by Labour Party and other politicians, promised but not delivered by gallery bosses. The mini-

mum wage in the United Kingdom for workers 21 and older is £6.50 (\$10) per hour. It is lower for younger workers and apprentices.

The day before the strike, bosses suspended Candy Udwin, senior union shop steward and a member of the union negotiating team. Udwin was charged with "breaching commercial confidentiality" for sending an email to her union asking officials to raise questions about new funding arrangements.

Udwin was suspended "to intimidate people," said Nigel Green, a fellow Public and Commercial Services Union member who works for the Royal Parks agency. "But it backfired." Many pickets held signs that read, "Reinstate Candy."

—Anne Howie

Airport workers demand regular schedules, pay raise

MINNEAPOLIS — Carrying a ban-



Union Advocate

Air Serv workers at Minneapolis-St. Paul airport rallied Jan. 15 with petition demanding regular hours and paper pay stubs so workers can make sure they're not being cheated on hours.

ner that read, "Our bills aren't on call — Our schedules shouldn't be," 40 Air Serv workers and supporters marched from Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport to Air Serv headquarters for a rally Feb. 17. The wheelchair pushers, cart drivers and cabin cleaners, who make \$8 to \$10 per hour, are demanding regular hours with set schedules and \$15 per hour.

"Right now I am only working three days a week for five hours a day," Suado Gabow, a wheelchair attendant, told the *Militant*. "The company has 'blue days.' You can be scheduled for work, and when you arrive, if a blue line is under your name, it means no work and go

home."

Air Serv workers recently forced the company to issue paper pay stubs instead of only posting the information online. This victory, giving those who don't have computers or Internet access a way to be sure they are being paid for all hours worked, came after a Jan. 15 rally and a petition campaign. A delegation of workers and their supporters went to the airport to deliver the petitions. When no one from Air Serv management would speak to them, they gave the petitions to the airport operations manager and chanted, "Shame on Air Serv."

—Hilde Makers

West Coast dockworkers push back boss attacks

BY BILL ARTH

LOS ANGELES — After engaging in an eight-month battle with the Pacific Maritime Association, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union agreed to a tentative contract Feb. 20.

The West Coast dockworkers fought boss smears seeking to paint the unionists as responsible for port congestion, lockouts from night work and for six days over the President's Day weekend, and pressure for a settlement from the Barack Obama administration.

Thousands of longshore workers showed up at the Local 13 dispatch hall in nearby Wilmington Feb. 21 for job assignments, as full-scale port operations resumed.

"The tentative agreement is subject to the membership ratification process, which will take some time," ILWU spokesman Craig Merrilees told the *Militant* in a letter. A meeting of 90 elected delegates from 29 ports will review the tentative pact, he said. If the delegates decide to recommend it to the membership, the text will be provided to all 20,000 members, followed by member-

ship meetings to discuss and vote on it.

The union succeeded in getting the truth out, explaining how the lockouts, the bosses' failure to train crane operators and the creation of a chronic shortage of chassis to transport containers were responsible for the growing disruption of trade. Rail bosses exacerbated the situation, prioritizing more profitable oil transport, leading to a shortage of trains to carry grain and cargo.

The Pacific Maritime Association made concessions to the longshore workers in a Feb. 4 contract proposal, including a 14 percent pay increase over five years, maintaining a health care plan paid entirely by the employers and returning jurisdiction to the union over maintenance and repair of chassis. There was still disagreement, however, over how workplace disputes are arbitrated.

Obama sent Labor Secretary Tom Perez to join the talks Feb. 17 and press for a deal.

The following day, some port bosses posted a two-page letter from Pacific

Maritime Association President James McKenna attempting an end run around the union and appealing directly to dockworkers. "The critical remaining issue is the union demand to change the longstanding procedure for retaining arbitrators and/or to unilaterally dismiss both current California arbitrators," the bosses' spokesman said. "This demand would undermine the independence of the arbitrators and the fairness of the arbitration process."

"The ILWU Negotiating Committee responded to concerns from members about inequities and injustices in the current area arbitration system," Merrilees told the *Militant*, "and were able to reach agreement on a new system that will increase fairness and respect for union members when disputes arise."

"Solidarity has prevailed!" Local 13 President Bobby Olvera and Vice President Mondo Porras said in a letter to members Feb. 20.

The lockouts and other efforts to attack the dockworkers have also adversely affected some 10,000 truck drivers who haul containers at the port. They have been fighting to be represented by the Teamsters union.

"Because the vast majority of port truck drivers are misclassified as independent contractors, every day that the ports are shut down, the drivers have gone further into the financial hole because they are paid by the load," said a statement released by the Teamsters Port Division Feb. 22. "And — even when the port is shut down — the boss has continued to deduct the cost of the truck, insurance, and even parking of the company truck at their own yard from their paychecks."

"This is wage theft and it is illegal," the statement said. "The longshoremen have fought for more than 100 years for a seat at the economic table; it is now the truckers' turn."



Stephen Carr/Daily Breeze

Thousands of Longshore union members and supporters march in San Pedro, Calif., Jan. 22.

Walmart blinks, raises pay

Continued from front page

the District of Columbia, the increase for many of our 1.4 million co-workers this year and next is good for all of us. The truth is wages are set from the bottom up.

Ten dollars an hour is certainly not enough. Many of us will still need to work more than one job or take public aid to get by, but the bosses' announcement shows that our fight is having an impact and that we can win more. The protests at stores across the country organized by OUR Walmart in November on Black Friday showed the potential to widen support.

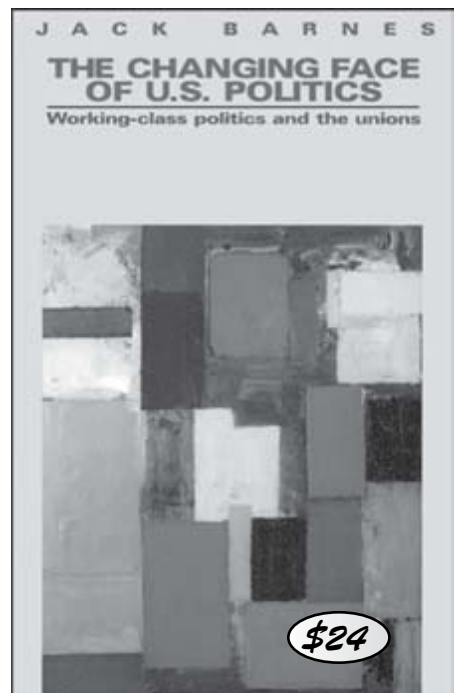
I'm an overnight stocker at the H Street Walmart. Most of my co-workers are part time and want to work full time. But Walmart has made no commitment to guarantee more hours, offering only a vague promise "to offer some associates fixed schedules." Many of my co-workers are temps, who don't even earn sick or vacation days. Walmart has been known to fire pregnant workers and encourage other abusive conditions.

The announced pay raise is also in part a result of an uptick in hiring. Some bosses are offering higher wages as they compete to hire and keep the workers they need. This gives us more confidence and leverage to demand better conditions, because we know that if need be we can find another job.

The same conditions have strengthened the confidence and resistance of oil refinery workers, who are carrying out the first national strike in decades over safety and forced overtime. Dockworkers on the West Coast just went through a monthslong battle over similar issues. Rail workers in the U.S. and Canada are fighting against bosses' attempts to run trains with one-man crews, reductions that will lead to death and destruction for workers and surrounding communities alike.

I saw this confidence and determination when I joined workers at Unity Sanitation in Maryland striking for better pay and with nurses at Providence Hospital and at Washington Hospital Center demanding better nurse-patient ratios.

Walmart's move was a cold-blooded business decision. They are concerned about losing workers and know our fight is having an impact. Still, as the *New York Daily News* said, "That is, quite literally, the least the retail behemoth can do." Walmart raked in \$16 billion in profits last year, profits that come from our labor.



www.pathfinderpress.com

"This pay increase would not have happened without OUR Walmart getting support from the community, unions and other labor organizations," my fellow fighter, Cynthia Murray, a leader of OUR Walmart at the store in Laurel, Maryland, told me. "But this is just an olive branch. Now is the time for more of us to stand up and demand \$15 an hour and full time. We can win this demand."

I could not agree more. Walmart blinked. Let's step up the fight.

Glova Scott works at Walmart, is a member of OUR Walmart and the Socialist Workers Party candidate for City Council in Washington, D.C.



Glova Scott, right, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Washington, D.C., City Council, with fellow OUR Walmart member Fatmata Jabbie participating in Black Friday Walmart protest last November.

Ferguson, Mo., suit exposes debtors' prisons

Continued from front page

"The City's modern debtors' prison scheme has been increasingly profitable to the City of Ferguson, earning it millions of dollars over the past several years," the suit says. "It has also devastated the City's poor, trapping them for years in a cycle of increased fees, debts, extortion, and cruel jailings." The suit seeks damages and an injunction against these practices.

The suit was filed on behalf of 11 plaintiffs by Equal Justice Under Law, ArchCity Defenders and St. Louis University School of Law. A similar lawsuit was filed against nearby Jennings, Missouri.

Last year cops and courts in Ferguson, a city of 21,000 residents, two-thirds of whom are African-American, issued more than 3.6 arrest warrants per household, nearly 2.2 warrants for every single adult. Most were in cases involving unpaid debt for tickets. Court fines and fees have become Ferguson's second-largest source of income, netting the city \$2.6 million in 2013.

"They're robbing us blind," Markese Mull, a friend of Brown's family in Ferguson, told the *Militant* in a phone interview Feb. 23. "They'll ticket you for a \$10 traffic violation and then tack on \$100 in warrant delivery fees and another \$100 in court costs."

"At one point I had tickets from several municipalities amounting to more than \$2,000. I gradually got it down to about \$600. But when I hit a tight spot and could only make a

'We see too many of these grade cross crashes'



More than 30 passengers were injured, at least four seriously, when a double decker MetroLink commuter train crashed into a truck at a crossing in Oxnard, California, during the morning rush hour Feb. 24. Five cars derailed, closing the tracks.

The truck was destroyed, engulfed in flames. Area authorities say the truck stalled on the tracks and the driver left, disoriented. He was later arrested. Farmworkers came out of nearby strawberry fields to help rescue passengers.

The crash comes just three weeks after a commuter train in Westchester County, New York, smashed into a car on the tracks, killing six and injuring more than a dozen.

MetroLink has a long history of deadly crashes and disregard for safety. In 2008, a commuter train plowed into a Union Pacific freight train in Chatsworth, California, killing 25 and injuring 135. Another commuter train in Glendale hit a truck parked on the tracks in 2005.

The Oxnard train was running with the engine in the back, a common practice that saves the bosses time and money. However, it increases the chance of derailment in a collision.

"I think we see way too many of these grade cross crashes across the U.S.," Deborah Hersman, former chair of the National Transportation Safety Board, told the press after the crash. While collisions near big cities get a lot of publicity, deaths and injuries from crashes at crossings are a fact of life in rural farming areas.

— JOHN STUDER

\$50 payment, they refused to accept it and kept tacking on court fees until it went back up to \$1,700. The system is not for working people."

"The city disputes any contention that individuals in any specific economic group were targeted for unfair treatment," said a statement issued by Ferguson authorities Feb. 9.

But the experiences of the plaintiffs over the past several years tell a different story.

Inmates at the city jail "are kept in overcrowded cells; they are denied toothbrushes, toothpaste, and soap; they are subjected to the constant stench of excrement and refuse in their congested cells," the suit says. "They are kept in the same clothes for days and weeks without access to laundry or clean underwear."

One plaintiff, Alfred Morris, 62, is a disabled veteran who was arrested in 2011 and again in 2012. Both times he "was forced to stay on mats that had bed bugs and lice." Anthony Kimble, a 53-year-old machine operator arrested in 2013, "was forced to sleep next to a dirty toilet" because there was only one bed for every three or four prisoners.

In a number of cases workers released after paying their fines were handed over to cops in a neighboring town and imprisoned for fees owed there, affecting their ability to get or keep jobs. Some were held in jail for two weeks or more and were not informed of their right to an attorney or provided with one.

"Many impoverished people end up paying thousands of dollars over a period of many years to the City based on a small number of relatively inexpensive initial tickets," the suit says, in violation of the due process and equal protection clauses of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Keilee Fant, 37, the lead plaintiff, is a single mother who works as a certified nurse's assistant. Over the past 20 years the city of Ferguson has jailed her more than a dozen times for not being able to make payments on old traffic tickets.

Herbert Nelson Jr., 26, another plaintiff, has been arrested and jailed three times in Jennings over the past year and a half. Each time, after paying hundreds of dollars in "fines" there he was then taken to the Ferguson jail and ordered to pay hundreds more for outstanding warrants and fees, some for the same old tickets.

"We're not criminals. It's just driving," he told National Public Radio, "and we're paying these big punishments," including, in his case, losing his driver's license.

Meanwhile, "a lawsuit against the Ferguson, Missouri, police department over a pattern of racially discriminatory tactics by officers" is being prepared by the Justice Department, CNN reported Feb. 19, which is expected to take up some of the same issues raised in the class-action case.

John Hawkins in Chicago contributed to this article.

Cuban 5 participation marks Havana book fair

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL
AND REBECCA WILLIAMSON

HAVANA — The most notable feature of this year's international book fair here has been the almost daily participation of the men known around the world as the Cuban Five and here as the Five Heroes.

The broad 11-day cultural event, attended by some 300,000 people, was marked by the confidence generated by the victory won with the return home in December of Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino and Antonio Guerrero, who spent more than 16 years in U.S. prisons. René González and Fernando González had been released from U.S. custody in May 2013 and February 2014.

Washington arrested the five in South Florida in 1998 and railroaded them to prison on trumped-up charges — including conspiracy to commit espionage and conspiracy to commit murder — because of their actions in defense of the Cuban Revolution. They had been working undercover to alert authorities in Havana about plans by U.S.-based paramilitary groups to carry out bombings and other attacks in Cuba.

In discussions at the book fair, and in daily conversations with Cubans everywhere, the Five Heroes come up time and again as a source of pride. Everyone wants to tell you where they were and what they were doing Dec. 17, when millions stopped to listen to President Raúl Castro announce on TV that Hernández, Labañino and Guerrero were back on Cuban soil. Workers, farmers, students and others across the island poured into the streets in spontaneous celebrations.

Since the return of Gerardo, Ramón and Tony, as they are universally known here, the three of them — plus Fernando and René — have been involved in a whirlwind of daily activities. They are responding to the joy of ordinary Cubans who want to welcome them home and hear what they have to say, including lessons they draw following a decade and a half or more in U.S. prisons.

As Tony Guerrero told an audience of young people at the José Antonio Echeverría Polytechnic Institute, known as CUJAE, however, “No battle waged by revolutionaries ends with something you once did. You don't live off what

you *did*. No, you have to live from what you *do* every day.”

Many people here watching the news heard Gerardo, Ramón and Tony after they got off the plane when they proudly reported for duty “for whatever is needed.”

Range of events

One or more of the Five participated in many book fair events and related activities. These included presentations of a collection of Labañino's prison poems, a CD of Guerrero's poetry with musical accompaniment and *The United States: The Price of Power* by Alejandro Castro Espín, a colonel in the Interior Ministry. They took part in launching a new edition of *Reto a la soledad* (Challenge to solitude) by retired Colonel Orlando

Cardoso Villavicencio, an account of his nearly 11 years as a prisoner of war in Somalia.

Several presentations centered on the new Pathfinder Press title *Absolved by Solidarity: 16 Watercolors for 16 Years of Unjust Imprisonment*. The book contains prison paintings by Antonio Guerrero depicting how the Five responded to the 2000-2001 frame-up trial in a U.S. court, plus an introductory photo section capturing the victorious return home in December.

One of these events was held at the science and technical university CUJAE. Another was sponsored by the Union of Young Communists at the Higher Institute for International Relations, which trains youth for Cuba's foreign service and counts Hernández and Fernando González among its graduates. The book was presented by Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder Press and a leader of the Socialist Workers Party in the U.S., and Jacob Perasso, a worker and member of the Young Socialists.

One of the largest book fair events, held Feb. 17, was attended by 250 people.



Militant/Martín Koppel

Front row of audience of some 250 at Feb. 17 Havana International Book Fair event on victory two months earlier in winning return home of all the Cuban Five. From left, Cuban Vice President José Ramón Fernández; Gerardo Hernández; Mirta Rodríguez, Antonio Guerrero's mother; Guerrero; Ramón Labañino; Elizabeth Palmeiro, Ramón's wife; Fernando González; René González; and Olga Salanueva, René's wife. The 11-day cultural event in Havana was marked by confidence Cuban working people gained as a result of the victory.

ple. Among those present were Gerardo, Ramón, Tony, Fernando, René, family members of the Five and former Cuban Vice President José Ramón Fernández, a Hero of the Republic who led the main column that defeated the U.S.-organized Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961. Also attending were Cuban Book Institute President Zuleica Romay; Kenia Serrano, president of the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples; and Andrés Gómez, a leader of the Antonio Maceo Brigade, a Cuban-American organization that supports the revolution.

The program included a panel of writers who discussed publishing activity in Cuba and worldwide in defense of the Cuban Five, and a presentation of *Retrato de una ausencia* (Portrait of an absence), a book about the Five by journalists Nyliam Vázquez and Oliver Zamora.

The event also featured a presentation of *Absolved by Solidarity*. The book's editor, Mary-Alice Waters, was joined on the platform by Tony Guerrero. Waters was introduced by Arleen Rodrí-

guez, coordinator of the Mesa Redonda (Roundtable) TV program.

Waters noted that the catalog of Tony's watercolors “is not a book that looks backwards. It is a book about the new battles ahead for *all* of us. About how those battles too will be won by men and women like Gerardo, Ramón, Tony, Fernando and René — the kind of men and women that only a deeply popular, proletarian revolution like Cuba's can produce.”

Working people in the U.S. can identify with Guerrero's paintings, Waters said, “because they connect so directly to the lives and struggles of millions,” including their own experience with class “justice” under capitalism.

“The victory represented by the return home of our Five Heroes,” Waters concluded, “also marks the opening of a new front in the decades-long battle to defend Cuba's independence, its sovereignty, its socialist revolution. As we say in English, ‘The tiger has not changed its stripes.’ Imperialism's tactics can shift,

Continued on page 10



Militant/Ron Poulsen

“No battle waged by revolutionaries ends with what you once *did*,” Antonio Guerrero told 300 students at CUJAE science and technical university event. “You have to live from what you *do* every day.” From left, Mary-Alice Waters, Pathfinder editor and Socialist Workers Party leader; CUJAE rector Alicia Alonso; Julián Gutiérrez, professor and organizer of CUJAE meeting; René González; Guerrero; and Fernando González.

New York City

HEAR LEADERS OF THE FEDERATION OF CUBAN WOMEN (FMC)

Leaders of the Federation of Cuban Women will be in New York for the UN Commission on the Status of Women. This year's delegation is led by FMC General Secretary Teresa Amarelle Boué, also a member of Cuba's National Assembly.

Sat., March 14

Reception: 6:00 pm • Program: 7:00 pm
Fordham Law School • 113 W 60th St.
(one block west of Columbus Circle)

Sponsor: July 26 Coalition of New York and New Jersey
For more information: www.july26coalition.org



Sharing the Struggle: Parents Against Police Brutality Exchange Experiences with Cuban Women

The Bronx • Sun., March 15 • 4:00 p.m.
2nd Christian Church • 595 East 169th St.

(Take no. 2 or 5 train to Simpson Street; transfer to Bx35 bus from Westchester and West Farms Road; get off at 169th and Franklin)

Snacks and refreshments will be served
For more information: 718-364-2879

Cuban Five: Example of what it means to be a revolutionary, to be a communist

‘Absolved by Solidarity’ by Antonio Guerrero, presented at Havana Book Fair, helps working people learn from a living socialist revolution

Below is the text of the presentation by Mary-Alice Waters of *Absolved by Solidarity* by Antonio Guerrero at two recent events in Havana, one at the Havana International Book Fair and the other at the José Antonio Echeverría Polytechnic Institute (CUJAE), Havana's main engineering and science university. (See accompanying article.) Waters, president of Pathfinder Press and a leader of the Socialist Workers Party in the U.S., is editor of the new book by Guerrero, one of the Cuban Five. Waters' remarks are copyright ©2015 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

PRESENTATION BY MARY-ALICE WATERS

Thank you Arleen, and a thank you to all of you who are with us here today.

Above all, however, a profound thank-you to Gerardo, Ramón, Tony, Fernando, and René for joining us. What an honor and a pleasure after so many years of communicating only through letters and sometimes the prison controlled email system, CorLinks!

If I may borrow from the words of tribute paid you by Puerto Rican independence leader Rafael Cancel Miranda, thank you for “the light and the strength” you have given us. For your example. You have demonstrated in today's world the honor that rightfully adheres to the words *revolutionary* and *communist*.

When I saw the video clip of Gerardo saluting as he came off the plane in December, and then heard his words to [Cuban President] Raúl [Castro] — “You can count on us for whatever is needed.” We're ready for our next assignments — *that's when I knew we had won*.

We owe that victory first and foremost to the conduct of the five comrades themselves, to their unbreakable integrity, discipline, creativity — and humor. To “the dignity learned from our peo-

ple,” as Tony puts it in the introduction to *Absolved by Solidarity*.

That victory was possible only because of the tireless, consistent support and activity of their families — wives, mothers, fathers, children, sisters, brothers and cousins all.

It was only possible because of the unwavering determination of the Cuban government and party leadership, including the ceaseless efforts of National Assembly President Ricardo Alarcón.

It was only possible because of the battle led from Cuba — for which great credit goes to Kenia Serrano and all the cadres of ICAP (Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples) — to build what Gerardo so accurately called the worldwide “jury of millions.”

It was only possible because of the efforts of the countless lawyers for whom defense of the Five became much more than a legal matter.

But I would like to add one more piece to this battle formation — the blow struck for the freedom of the Five by Fidel and Raúl's “army of white coats” fighting the deadly virus of Ebola in West Africa today. When the first articles praising the professionalism, selflessness, and courage of the hundreds of Cuban medical volunteers on their way to Africa began appearing on the front page of newspapers like the *Wall Street Journal* last October, I knew the day of Gerardo, Ramón, and Tony's freedom had just come closer.

Tony puts all this in his own beautiful words in *Absolved by Solidarity*. “We never felt defeated,” he wrote. “We knew we would be acquitted by the honest men and women of the world, who have today become a growing wave of solidarity that won't break until it carries us home.”

Battles ahead, not looking back

That is what *Absolved by Solidarity* is about. That is why its publication could not be more timely.

This is not a book that looks back-



Prison conditions Tony Guerrero portrays in his watercolors are something working people in U.S. “immediately identify with,” said Mary-Alice Waters, “because they, their parents, their friends and loved ones have lived it as well.” That's one reason more than 25,000 copies of Pathfinder books on the Five have been sold in last three years. Above, Guerrero and Waters speaking at Havana book fair, Feb. 17. “One out of every 35 adults in the U.S. is behind prison walls or on probation or parole,” Waters said. Top right, triple-bunked prisoners at California prison, 2006.

wards. It is a book about the new battles ahead for all of us. About how they too will be won by men and women like Gerardo, Ramón, Tony, Fernando and René — the kind of men and women that only a deeply popular, proletarian revolution like Cuba's can produce. Men and women with the dignity, strength, and humanity of the Cuban Revolution and of the five unbowed soldiers who became the face of that revolution the world over.

Absolved by Solidarity reproduces the 16 watercolors that are on display here today, painted by Tony to mark the 16th anniversary of their imprisonment. They tell the story of the seven-month-long 2000-2001 trial in Miami, in which, as Tony writes, the U.S. government “secured the conditions it needed to ensure we wouldn't have the slightest chance of being acquitted.”

Pathfinder's editors were within hours of sending the book to the printer when news flashed around the world the morning of Dec. 17 that Gerardo, Ramón, and Tony were free. That their feet were already planted on Cuban soil.

That was a historic victory, so we stopped the presses for a few days. The editors went back to work, and the book you have before you now includes an introductory five pages recording that extraordinary moment, including three pages of photos of the arrival of Gerardo, Ramón, and Tony and the spontaneous explosion of joy in factories, schools, and streets from Havana, to Santa Clara, Santiago, and beyond.

We adjusted the cover and added the verdict: “The jury of millions has spoken! The Cuban Five are Free!”

Experience of millions of workers

The main thing I want to emphasize is the political importance of the two books of paintings by Tony — *Absolved by Solidarity*, and *I Will Die the Way I've Lived*, which reproduces 15 watercolors from the year before portraying the 17 months the compañeros spent in the “hole” at the Miami Federal Detention Center after their arrests in 1998. I want to describe how we are using those paintings and books — in the United States especially — along with two related titles, *Voices From Prison* and *The Cuban Five: Who They Are, Why They Were Framed, Why They Should Be Free*.

Tony's books are not only impressive works of art. For us they have been powerful weapons in the political battle to win the freedom of the Five, because they connect so directly to the lives and struggles of millions of working people in the U.S.

As many of you are aware, and as our five brothers know from the inside, the United States has the highest rate of incarceration in the world. The police, courts, and prisons are simply the domestic face, the domestic foundation of the class bias, repression and racism of the imperialist monster you know well.

More than 2.2 million men and women are behind bars right now, with some 4.8 million more living under some form of “supervised release,” such as René endured for more than a year and a half, between walking out of a federal prison and returning home to Cuba. To put it another way, by Washington's own figures, 1 out of every 35 adults in the U.S. is behind prison walls or on probation or parole. Yes, *I in every 35!* There is hardly a working-class family that doesn't have a relative,



“Political interest is spreading in United States in books about Cuba's revolutionary example of how workers and farmers can fight effectively, change ourselves and win,” Waters said. Broadening resistance to bosses' drive to “solve” capitalist crisis on workers' backs widens appeal. Above, nurses join striking oil refinery workers on picket line at Tesoro plant, Martinez, California, Feb. 18.

a neighbor, a fellow worker or friend caught somewhere in the toils of this system of American capitalist “justice.”

What Tony portrays in his paintings is something they immediately identify with because they, their parents, their friends and loved ones have lived it as well.

And that includes even children. After seeing an exhibit of *I Will Die the Way I've Lived*, a group of children at the Jackie Robinson Community Center in East Harlem, New York, some as young as 6 and 7 years old, wrote colorful notes addressed to each of the Five expressing their feelings. One of them I recall — I think it was addressed to Ramón — said roughly, “I'm sorry you are in prison just because you were protecting your country. I wish I could help but I'm only 7 years old. I don't have a job, so I don't have money to pay for a lawyer who could get you out. I hope they let you go.”

That child was speaking from his own painful experience, even at that age. There are millions of other working-class families for whom the same is true.

That is why the response to other Pathfinder books about the Cuban Five has also been so strong, books such as *Voices From Prison*, whose pages contain accounts by fellow inmates, by

others railroaded to prison for their political activity, and by members of the Five and their families.

Political interest in the Five — and in books recording Cuba's revolutionary example of how workers and farmers can fight effectively, change themselves in the process, and win — is spreading in the U.S. It is spreading parallel to, and made possible by, broadening resistance to efforts by employers, their government, and their Democratic and Republican parties to resolve the long, grinding capitalist crisis on our backs. And that's what's going on today among refinery workers, longshoremen, rail workers, stockers and salespeople at giant retailers, and others. There's an increase in fights right now, as a result, among other things, of a modest upturn in hiring that's boosting confidence and making it a little harder for bosses to wield the unemployment club against us.

At union meetings and picket lines, at schools and popular demonstrations, and above all as socialist workers go door to door in working-class neighborhoods selling subscriptions to the *Militant* newspaper along with books and pamphlets, thousands of copies of titles about the Cuban Five have been sold in the U.S.

When we totaled up the figures a



Cuban medical volunteers in Sierra Leone in February. Professionalism, selflessness and courage of revolutionary Cuba's “army of white coats” set worldwide example in fighting Ebola in West Africa. When Cuba's internationalist mission became front-page news in late 2014, “I knew the day of freedom for Gerardo, Ramón and Tony was closer,” said Mary-Alice Waters.

few days ago, I myself was surprised to see that more than 25,000 copies of the books on the Five being presented here today have been sold in the last three and a half years, the overwhelming majority of them in the U.S.

In addition to reaching out as widely as possible with these and other books, over the last year of the battle to win freedom for the Five, we and others were able to organize more than 25 exhibitions of Tony's paintings, sometimes together with drawings by Gerardo, in 14 cities across the U.S. — in schools, community centers, churches, art galleries, cafes and libraries. Others took place in cities around the world, from Athens to Panama, from the Australian Outback to Jakarta to London.

And the powerful installation by Cuban artist Kcho at the National Museum of Fine Arts here in Havana topped it off.

Our Five Heroes have lived many long years on the front lines of the class struggle in the U.S., and their ability to connect with working people there is of immense importance in the battles going forward. That is one of the reasons, of course, that Washington insisted that René and Tony renounce their U.S. citizenships. *They still fear you, compañeros*. And they still fear the working people of Cuba.

Just as the U.S. rulers fear us — the workers and farmers of the United States — at the same time that our political capacities and revolutionary potential are as utterly discounted by them as those of the Cuban toilers once were. And just as wrongly.

Worldwide spread

Let me end on two points.

First a word about the languages into which the books we are presenting today have been translated, and the scope of the international campaign to free Cuba's Five Heroes. The covers of those books in many languages are on display here. Each is available in English and in Spanish. But they've been published in other tongues as well:

The Cuban Five: Who They Are, Why They Were Framed, Why They Should Be Free in French, Farsi, and much of it in Greek;

Voices From Prison in Arabic, French, and Farsi; and

I Will Die the Way I've Lived, now in French and Farsi as well.

The French translations were done by comrades in Quebec and France, and are being used at political events in both countries. They were in Haiti at the international book fair in December at which Cuba was the country of honor. They are being sold in Burkina Faso, Mali, and elsewhere in West Africa, where supporters of Pathfinder organized to travel and promote them last year.

The Arabic translation was done by comrades in Lebanon and Greece. They were presented at the Cuban Five committee's booth at the Beirut international book fair in November, where many visitors learned about the Cuban Revolution and the Five for the first time.

The books in Farsi are of special interest. They are edited and printed in Tehran by an Iranian publishing house and distributed in more than 30 major cities. Some 20,000 copies of these and other books in Farsi that tell the truth about the Cuban Revolution have been sold in Iran in the last years — including titles such as *Socialism and Man in Cuba*, *The First and Second Declarations of Havana*, and *Marianas in Combat*.

Some of these books make their way into Afghanistan as well, where Farsi — called Dari in that country — is the majority written language. Afghan distributors visiting the Tehran International Book Fair have bought hundreds of these books to take back to Afghanistan, where some have been pirated and reprinted in thousands of copies sold at book fairs there.

What accounts for the determination of those who have built the jury of millions worldwide to translate these books into languages that working people in their own countries can read?

The answer, as I said earlier, is that these books are *not about the past*. They are not primarily about an international defense campaign that has been won and is now over. Reading *today* about

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Read more on the Cuban Revolution...

Absolved by Solidarity

16 Watercolors for 16 Years of Unjust Imprisonment
Spanish/English edition

Cuba & Angola

Fighting for Africa's Freedom and Our Own \$12 Also in Spanish

Voices From Prison

\$7 Also in French, Arabic, Farsi and Spanish

I Will Die the Way I've Lived

Prison paintings by Antonio Guerrero \$7 Also in French, Farsi and Spanish

The Cuban Five

Who They Are, Why They Were Framed, Why They Should Be Free \$5
Also in Spanish, French and Farsi

See distributors on page 11 or visit:

www.pathfinderpress.com

Cuban 5 at int’l book fair

Continued from page 7

but the goal remains the same. Through one form of aggression or another, their objective is to overturn the property and social relations conquered by the working people of Cuba over 55 years of struggle and counting.” (The text of Waters’ presentation appears on pages 8-9.)

Guerrero said that when he and his four brothers were in prison, “every book Pathfinder sent us — they sent them in Spanish and English — gave us incredible strength, because they told us that ‘in the belly of the beast,’ to use José Martí’s words, there are people who know how to fight to build a better world.” Likewise, the Five were encouraged by the work of Cuban-American groups that campaigned for their release, such as the Alianza Martiana and the Antonio Maceo Brigade.

Guerrero said he was impressed that their supporters in Miami had organized an exhibit of his first set of 15 watercolors, titled “I Will Die the Way I’ve Lived,” despite threats by right-wing Cuban-American groups. Last August, as he contemplated a project to paint a new set of 16 watercolors, “what convinced me that I had to commit myself to do that was when they put up that exhibit in Miami.”

Today the book *Absolved by Solidarity* “is an important weapon to denounce the injustices of the U.S. judicial system,” he said. It helps expose how that system commits arbitrary actions “not only against us but against many other fighters, many other workers and ordinary people.”

Exchange with students

Two days later, Waters joined Tony, Fernando and René to present the book to an audience of 300 students and faculty members at the CUJAE campus.

To be a revolutionary, communist

Continued from page 9

Gerardo, Ramón, Antonio, Fernando, and René, working people learn about a *living socialist revolution* — including the working-class internationalism of hundreds of thousands of Cubans in Angola who aided the liberation of southern Africa from colonialism and white supremacy.

A new front

The victory represented by the return home of our Five Heroes also marks the opening of a new front in the decades-long battle to defend Cuba’s independence, its sovereignty, its socialist revolution. As we say in English, “The tiger has not changed its stripes.” Imperialism’s tactics can shift, but the goal remains the same: through one form of aggression or another, their objective is to overturn the property and social relations conquered by the working people of Cuba over 55 years of struggle and counting.

I liked the way Cuba’s former Minister of Culture Abel Prieto put it in popular and easily understood words the other day when he told an audience here at La Cabaña, “If market relations ever become dominant again in Cuba, you can kiss this book fair good-bye.”

“The cheap prices of commodities are the heavy artillery” with which the bourgeoisie wages its battle to “compel all nations, on pain of ex-

Julián Gutiérrez, the main organizer of the event, is a professor and coordinator of the University Network in Solidarity with the Five, which for years has organized a monthly cultural and educational event on campus in support of the Cuban Five — *la peña*, as it’s known. CUJAE rector Alicia Alonso also joined the platform.

“This is the first peña that is not *for* the Five but *with* them,” Gutiérrez announced to applause.

The afternoon turned into a lively exchange. Tony, René and Fernando immediately established a rapport with the students, exchanging light-hearted anecdotes about the school while giving serious answers to their questions.

Guerrero said that in prison they received the *Militant* every week. The *Militant* “never stopped publishing articles about us,” he said. Other prisoners would say, “Look, these people always appear in the paper,” and became interested in learning more about them and what they represented. The coverage of their fight helped protect them in prison.

Guerrero noted how the *Militant* reported on work in defense of the Cuban Five, including several dozen exhibits of the watercolors in cities across the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and other countries. “The paper would report that exhibits of ‘I Will Die the Way I’ve Lived’ were being shown in this city, this city, that city. And the following week it would be a new list of cities” — as far away as New Zealand, he noted.

Tony recalled how children at the Jackie Robinson Community Center in Harlem in New York City wrote letters to the Five after seeing an exhibit of his paintings there, and he wrote back to them.

tion to adopt the bourgeois mode of production,” Marx explained in the Communist Manifesto.

As you continue to demonstrate in life — as the Cuban Revolution has done from the outset — that human labor, not the purchase of a commodity called labor power, is the future of a sustainable and livable world, *you can be confident that you are not alone*. Others stand and fight alongside you as you wage that economic and political battle — that battle of ideas, that battle to close the gap in the productivity of social labor.

The victory that has been won with the freedom of our Five brothers brings renewed confidence to your comrades in struggle the world over, including in the United States.

So we’ll close with the words of René in one of his letters to Olguita that you will find in the pages of *Absolved by Solidarity*.

The day “our absurd punishment comes to an end,” René wrote, “the US government, even without saying so, will be conceding its biggest defeat.” Despite all their efforts, he said, “they could not take from us *the moral high ground* to judge Cuba. ... Our release from prison will be one more vindication of Cuba.”

And so it is.

The jury of millions has spoken!

The Cuban Five are free — and as disciplined soldiers go forward, as Gerardo said, to do *whatever* is needed!



Militant/Tamar Rosenfeld

Above, letters written to Cuban Five by children, some 6 or 7 years old, on display in 2014 at Jackie Robinson Community Center in Harlem, New York, along with exhibit of Guerrero’s 15 watercolors, “I Will Die the Way I’ve Lived.” Guerrero answered the letters.

Guerrero and his two comrades were peppered with questions by the students. Asked why he never stopped “being happy” while in prison, he replied, “Every morning when you get up, it’s a critical moment in your life — a new opportunity for you. But some moments are decisive.” If every day you prepare through what you do and internalize your convictions, “when that moment comes, you are ready, and at night you are able to go to sleep, at peace with yourself.”

Describing the day the five of them were arrested by FBI agents in 1998, he recalled, “A guy asks you to admit to something you didn’t do, and you have two options. If you go over to his side, you can get back all the material things you had. The other option [if you say no] is that things are going to get real tough. The man tells you, ‘Look, we’re going to give you a long sentence and you’re going to die in prison.’

“At that moment you have to be prepared. You have to have defined something inside you to know what to do. Then, after you passed that test and said no, you begin to realize you’re happier than everyone around you.”

René González added that when they were locked up, “the first target

[of the jailers and prosecutors] was our dignity.” But each of them refused to give in to the blackmail. In prison they were deprived of the most basic material means, while the prosecutors “had everything” in terms of a comfortable existence. Nonetheless, “the most unhappy people throughout the trial were the prosecutors,” René said. “We made them miserable.”

A student asked when they were going to meet Cuban leader Fidel Castro, who from the beginning played a central role in mobilizing support for the Five Heroes. “We are certain we’re going to see Fidel, and that he’s interested in talking with us,” Guerrero replied. “But he doesn’t want to be the first one — he’s a down-to-earth person; that’s what’s great about him. So don’t despair, we’ll see him.”

“Right now we have work to do,” Guerrero said, coming back to a point he had made earlier. “My job, René’s and Fernando’s is not to keep coming back here every day. We can’t keep talking about the same things 37 times. We’re going to work, like everyone, and work together.” His response met applause from the students.

A coming issue of the *Militant* will publish excerpts from the exchange.

May 30 NY march to boost fight to free Oscar López

BY TOM LEWIS

NEW YORK — Fifty people, including carloads from Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, gathered at Hostos Community College in the Bronx Feb. 14 to plan the next steps in the fight to free Oscar López Rivera. López, a Puerto Rican independence fighter, has been imprisoned in the U.S. on frame-up charges, including “seditious conspiracy,” for more than 33 years, many in solitary confinement. The meeting focused on building a May 30 march in New York City demanding López’s release. López was arrested May 29, 1981.

Conference participant Maria Kercado, a vice president of Service Employees International Union District 1199, told the *Militant* that the health care workers union “has been committed to this case for a long time.”

In Puerto Rico, support for freeing López is widespread. The two largest political parties in the government — sister parties of the Democrats and

Republicans — have called on President Barack Obama to release López, as have numerous labor unions and leaders of the Catholic and Methodist churches on the island.

“We need to keep Oscar in the lime-light,” his brother, José López, director of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center in Chicago, told the meeting. “The May 30 mobilization is key. Everyone counts that day.”

There will also be activities in New York at the end of April to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the death of Pedro Albizu Campos, López announced. Albizu Campos led the fight for independence for Puerto Rico from 1930 to the 1950s and spent many years in U.S. prisons because of his intransigent opposition to U.S. colonial rule.

The May 30 march will gather at 125th Street and Adam Clayton Powell Blvd. at 11 a.m.

For more information or to get flyers and buttons, visit www.freeoscarnyc-may30.org

Solidarity with Ukraine workers!

A year ago the *Militant* joined millions of working people across Ukraine in celebrating the toppling of the pro-Moscow regime of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich following months of mass mobilizations and clashes with government forces. At the heart of the struggle was the aspiration of the Ukrainian people to break free from oppressive Russian domination that has lasted for centuries, with the exception of the early years of the 1917 Russian Revolution under the leadership of V.I. Lenin. Yanukovich, hated for his corruption and repression of political rights, had bowed to pressure from Russian President Vladimir Putin to maintain Moscow's economic and political stranglehold on Ukraine.

Many of the workers, youth and others who took part in the Maidan protests in Kiev and around the country told worker-correspondents from the *Militant* that while Yanukovich had fled, those who took his place were the same old faces, servants of the "oligarchs," as the Ukrainian capitalists are described. That's why it took months, and pressure from growing combat in the east, for the new government, headed by billionaire Petro Poroshenko, to dismantle the last of the Maidan encampments.

Without a revolutionary change of government, the Ukrainian ruling class and their imperialist backers in Washington and Europe will continue to squeeze workers and farmers — from cutting real wages and social benefits to closing mines and factories with no

effort to provide other jobs. Their approach to the separatist war, including treating civilians in the east as the enemy and clamping down on democratic rights, will continue to undermine the effort to defend Ukrainian sovereignty from Moscow's assault.

The Maidan victory spurred the growth of independent union fights against the attacks of the bosses and their government. Out of these and other battles, and collaboration with revolutionaries worldwide, workers can build political organizations independent of the bosses and their parties and forge a revolutionary working-class leadership in Ukraine. Such a leadership can chart a course of uniting working people in both the east and west, in defense of Ukrainian sovereignty, labor and political rights, on the road toward workers power.

A key part of that struggle is building international working-class solidarity. That's why workers should oppose the imperialist-led sanctions that are increasingly squeezing the toilers in Russia today. What Putin and the rest of the ruling class in Moscow most fear is that working people in Russia will follow the example of the Maidan protesters in seeking to take their future into their own hands.

Working people around the world should continue to stand in solidarity with the toilers in Ukraine. Moscow's troops out of Ukraine! End the occupation of Crimea! End the sanctions against Russia! Solidarity with workers' struggles in Ukraine!

Oil workers' strike strengthens us, socialist says

Continued from front page

strike here and workers said most had turned out for a union meeting the day before to get an update on negotiations and developments in the strike.

"The expansion of the strike is good news, it strengthens the hand of USW members fighting for more control over working conditions and for cuts in 12-hour shifts and forced overtime that leave refinery workers plagued by fatigue," Fein said. "The strength of the labor movement lies in our numbers and using our collective power."

That afternoon Fein and supporters campaigned door to door in the Logan Square neighborhood of Chicago. "Before the austerity attacks in Greece, education was free, including college. All of this is gone," George Xerikos, a retired AT&T worker originally from Greece, told Fein. "I am neither for the far right or the far left, I favor something in the middle."

"I don't see politics in terms of left and right, but of working class and capitalist class. The rulers in Greece have a debt to their stronger imperialist rivals in Europe and the U.S.," Fein said. "It is not a debt of the workers and farmers. But as long as capital rules, workers and farmers will bear the brunt regardless of whether the new government renegotiates the loans."

Xerikos wasn't sure Greece could survive without the loans.

"Working people in Greece need to chart a course to overthrow the rule of capital, to take political power into their own hands, like they did in Cuba in 1959,"

Fein said. "A revolutionary government in Greece could use the resources and the wealth that the toilers produce to eliminate unemployment, putting people to work building schools, housing, hospitals, child care centers and other crucial necessities.

"Such a society will not be based on the profit system, but on workers and farmers using their own political power to set priorities and mobilize to meet the needs of working people," he said. "And joining in the worldwide struggle for socialism. This is the same perspective the SWP campaign raises for working people in the U.S."

Fein told home health care worker Chelsey Anderson, 26, by her apartment, that he just came from the Steelworkers picket line in Whiting and urges all working people to support their strike.

"Did you hear about the longshoremen's settlement on the West Coast?" Anderson asked.

"The International Longshore and Warehouse Union has been fighting for a contract since mid-summer. Like the refinery workers, they are an example of the growing resistance to attacks by the bosses," Fein said. "The Obama administration sent its secretary of labor to press for a settlement. The big factory owners, agribusiness, retail giants like Walmart and transportation bosses want an end to the disruption of trade. Government intervention like this is never neutral, they take the side of the bosses."

"It's good to know that there is a campaign that represents workers," Anderson said.

LETTERS

An enlightening paper

I want to thank you for the subscription to the *Militant*. I am the only person here who receives it. It is an enlightening, inspiring and educational newspaper giving us an in-depth perspective and insight on current and world economic, political, social events from the people's side.

*A prisoner
California*

Disappointed in pipeline article

I was deeply disappointed to see your recent piece on the XL pipeline [in issue no. 5] by Ms. Trowe. Not

only is the piece essentially incoherent (oil is rarely used for electric generation, to just point out one of many major blunders), it dismisses concerns about what is arguably the greatest threat to workers and to the rest of us, Global Warming.

'Militant' Prisoners' Fund

The Prisoners' Fund makes it possible to send prisoners reduced rate subscriptions. To donate, send a check or money order payable to the Militant and earmarked "Prisoners' Fund" to 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018.

To see such a position come from, not a Tea Party or Republican organ, but from a source I have come to admire over the years for its brave defense of the oppressed is more than disappointing to me.

J. Harkness

Minneapolis, Minnesota

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

Toilers worldwide need electrification

BY MAGGIE TROWE

In his Feb. 9 letter, J. Harkness takes issue with the article I wrote titled "Pipeline Debate Ignores Energy Needs of World's Toilers," saying "it dismisses concerns about what is arguably the greatest threat to workers and to the rest of us, Global Warming."

Harkness also says he thinks the article was incoherent and full of blunders, asserting that oil is rarely used to produce electricity. This is true in the United States, where only about 1 percent of electrical generation comes from petroleum.

REPLY TO A READER

But if we start with the world, it's a different story. Diesel generators are widely used in the semicolonial world, like in India, where an estimated 4 million diesel generators run irrigation pumps. Developing modern agriculture requires tractors and petroleum-based fertilizers and pesticides.

Construction of large-scale power generation across a national electrical grid in rural Malaysia or Sierra Leone demands petroleum products to fuel backhoes and trucks to build roads, towns, dams, modern housing, schools and hospitals equipped with electrical lights and appliances. Toilers of both city and countryside from the U.S. to India need light after dark to advance education, culture and political struggle.

Harkness says global warming is the greatest threat to workers. My article asserts that the greatest threat to the working class is the dictatorship of capital on a world scale.

Protection of nature — which includes but is far from limited to reducing carbon dioxide emissions that tend to raise the average temperature — can't be divorced from the class struggle. It's part of it. The capitalists operate for profit and have contempt for the health and safety of the workers and farmers they exploit and the land, air and water they foul.

The toiling majority of humanity worldwide, by contrast, has a deep interest in making industrial and agricultural production safe for ourselves and our communities.

Working-class politics start with the world. The needs, interests and fighting capacity of the toilers in the semicolonial world, who make up the vast majority of its inhabitants, are critical.

When many who call themselves environmentalists talk about what "we" should do, they mean everyone in the U.S. But there are two classes with diametrically opposed interests in this country. Revolutionary-minded working people in the U.S. should fight for the expansion of nuclear power in Africa, Asia and Latin America, which produces the greatest amount of energy with the least use of resources and the smallest output of atmospheric pollution. Unfortunately, many who claim to speak in defense of the earth oppose nuclear power, saying they fear inevitable catastrophes.

The working-class movement must reject a hysterical sky-is-falling mentality, crass not-in-my-backyard chauvinism and anti-working-class prejudice of petty-bourgeois catastrophists, who predict disaster if "they" in the semicolonial countries don't accept a lower standard of living. Their discredited 1950s counterparts predicted multiplying population growth in Africa and Asia would mean we all starve to death.

The fight for more electrification under capitalism must be coupled with a class-struggle battle for workers control of conditions on the job to protect both land and labor. All significant reforms are by-products of revolutionary proletarian struggle, and many concessions will be wrested from the bosses and their governments as we fight for a workers and farmers government based on human solidarity and the stewardship of the land on a worldwide scale.

I urge Harkness and others concerned about these questions to read *New International*, especially issues no. 13 and 14, which contain "Our Politics Start With the World" by Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party; "Farming, Science, and the Working Classes" by Steve Clark; and "The Stewardship of Nature Also Falls to the Working Class: In Defense of Land and Labor," a statement adopted by the SWP's 2007 convention.